

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 45th ANNUAL CONFERENCE HELD AT CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.1. ON FRIDAY, SATURDAY AND SUNDAY APRIL 15th, 16th AND 17th 1949.

The General Secretary called the conference to order at 11.10.a.m.

<u>Chairman.</u>	R. McDowall.
<u>Vice-Chairman</u>	W. Waters.
<u>Tellers.</u>	Howard and Alley.

Item (1) E.C. Meetings. - no action.

Item (2) E.C. Attendances. - no action.

(3) BRANCHES AND MEMBERSHIP.

(a) Central Branch - no action.

(b) Report of Central Organiser.

RESOLUTION - Lawrence (Bloomsbury) Andrews (Southend) "That this conference recommends Branches not to hold unduly large balances in their Branch funds".
Resolution carried 29-17.

(c) New Branches - No action.

(d) Exclusion.

RESOLUTION - (Hackney Branch) "That contrary to the E.C.'s decision this Conference positively asserts that any member holding views contrary to the Declaration of Principles does by holding such views constitute action detrimental to the interests of the Party"

Hackney opened by saying that we could not have in the Party members holding views contrary to our principles. If we did we could have members with pro-capitalist ideas, denying the class struggle etc. Applicants for membership had to agree with our principles, but if we had members disagreeing with them there would be considerable confusion with would-be members. If we think our principles are incorrect we should change them but not allow members to remain in who disagree with them. Manchester opposed the resolution and said that we must always be prepared to examine the correctness of our principles in the light of changing conditions, otherwise we will become a dogmatic sect with the founder members holding a permanent mandate over the Party. Members who disagree with our principles should be given freedom to criticise. South West London supported the resolution and argued that the Party was built on the Declaration of Principles and a member who did not agree with them should be put outside the Party. Bloomsbury held that Hackney was really concerned with members attacking the Party in public. If this resolution were carried we should be dabbling in 'Dangerous' thoughts' and those who thought differently on our principles would be put outside. There are opposing views in the Party on Trade Unions and also on the past war when some members considered that an Allied Victory was preferable to a Nazi victory. Croydon considered that any diversion from our Principles is a danger to the Party as we use them as a guide, but if our principles are at fault we should change them. Fulham asked how it would be possible to alter the Declaration of Principles if all who did not agree with them were sent out of the Party. A matter of over forty years standing should surely be subject to discussion. Edware supported the resolution and said that if members held views contrary to our principles the work of the Party would be hindered and the Party would continually be occupied with useless discussion. If the EC did not consider that it was detrimental to Party interests for members to hold views contrary to our principles why did they ask a member who volunteered for the Armed forces to resign? West Ham claimed that the resolution was unnecessary as our rules already covered questions of discipline adequately. If a member violently disagrees with us the present rules could deal with it. Islington said that branches need not waste their time with long discussions with members disagreeing with the principles. Members who disagree with us in the end invariably leave. If this resolution were carried we should have to have careful interpretation of each part of the Declaration of Principles. Another Bloomsbury delegate pointed out that in the past we had had members who had interpreted the Declaration of Principles very differently to the majority of the Party but they had not been expelled. If the resolution were carried members would be reluctant to discuss issues involving controversial interpretation of our Principles. An EC member said that the EC had tried to draw a line between thinking and acting. Hackney's aim was sound, they wanted a Party in which members agreed with each other but their resolution would not have that effect. Would they for example, charge members who submitted articles to the Editorial Committee which showed an unsound basis. If the threat of expulsion is held over members

they will not voice their views and they will go uncorrected. Newport supported the resolution. The delegate said that if we permitted members to disagree with the principles we had no reason to exclude from membership applicants who disagreed with them. An EC member said that the fault was that of the EC. The real case against the member of Hackney Branch was that he had expressed views contrary to the Party principles in public and therefore he had worded their resolution to Hackney badly. Another EC member said that all issues of party controversy were tied up with the Declaration of Principles and he gave examples of Spain and the last war. The party would die without discussion. If we accept the resolution we should always be in the position of a polling a minority. A further EC member said that acceptance of the Declaration of Principles was the test for applicants. It contained the minimum and the maximum. Another EC member said that even if carried the resolution could not be put into operation as there were no means by which the views of members could be established unless they expressed them. This resolution would turn the Declaration of Principles into a dry script. We want our principles to remain a living document. A second Hackney delegate said that the real 'Dangerous thoughts' today were those by which the working class supported Capitalism.

The resolution was lost 29-50.

Record of voting. For:- Bradford Croydon Dartford Edgware Hackney Newport (1) Paddington St. Pancras Southend and SW London.

Against:- Bloomsbury Ealing Fulham Glasgow Islington Kingston Lewisham Leyton Manchester Marylebone Palmers Green West Ham, Woolwich. Abstained - Tottenham.

RESOLUTION Guy and Leche (Lewisham) "That this conference endorses the EC's action with regard to Comrade Ross".

DEFERRING RESOLUTION:- Robertson (Hackney) Korr (West Ham) "That consideration of the resolution be deferred to the Delegate meeting" Lost 14-39.

The resolution was carried 27-19.

(c) E.J. STACEY.

RESOLUTION- Ealing Branch "That this conference considers it detrimental to the Party's interests for a member to voluntarily join the Forces (ie Army Navy and Police Forces) and a member so doing shall be lapsed".

Amendment 1. Ealing and Lewisham "That the words 'and police' be deleted".

" 2. Hackney, Paddington and Croydon "That the word 'lapsed' be deleted and the word 'expelled' inserted.

" 3. S.W. London "That the words 'Be lapsed' be deleted and the words 'automatically cease membership' be inserted"

" 4. Bloomsbury "That this conference considers that any member who voluntarily (ie other than conscripted) joins the fighting forces (Army Navy and Air Force) automatically terminates his or her membership of the Party".

" 5. Glasgow "That this conference recommends that any member of the SPGB voluntarily joining the armed forces be expelled".

Ealing opened by saying that the Branch now considered that the resolution and amendments were out of order in that they conflicted with Party rules and that they could not now support their own motion. The chairman ruled that the resolution and amendments were in order.

RESOLUTION:- Barras and Critchfield (Ealing) "That the chairman leave the chair" lost by a large majority.

Marylebone were in favour of the automatic cessation of membership when members volunteer for the forces. How can we say we oppose the war when members volunteer for the forces? There should be a general rule and cases should not be judged on their alleged merits. Edgware said that we expelled members who joined the Labour Party to which we were opposed and this surely should apply to the armed forces. Conscripts may be unable to avoid service but volunteers go without pressure. The General Secretary gave an account of the attitude of the Party on this question previously. In the 1914/18 war the attitude was to judge each case on its merits from the point of view of the economic pressure to which the member was subject. This was of course before conscription was introduced. Some members had been expelled and in other cases the EC then had refused to ratify expulsion by Branches. Hackney claimed that it was an embarrassment to the Party if members volunteered for the forces. South West London asked Hackney what difference was there in principle between members in the forces and those making armaments. Hackney replied that although there was little choice Socialists as munition workers could justify their position. Workers had very little choice when the firms for which they worked turned over to armaments. The armed forces are used to subjugate the working class. An EC member opposed the resolution and amendments on the grounds that they conflicted with Party rule and were a violation of the rights of membership. Members were never turned out of the Party except by the operation of Party rule and this resolution and amendments introduced a new principle. However a member acted contrary to the interests of the Party he had the right so far to defend himself at his Branch when charged or at a Delegate meeting or conference.

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Croydon Branch in support of their amendment, claimed that the lapsing of members only operated where non-payment of dues is concerned. A Hackney delegate said that political activity was impossible for members of the armed forces. He said that the armed forces were a revolutionary organisation and it is inconsistent for us to be members of forces that exist to defend that to which we are opposed. Leyton urged that it was possible for members of the forces to engage in political activity. We do not give up our jobs even though they assist in running the system. Another Leyton delegate asked that each case be judged on its merits. Any member who volunteers should have the right to defend his action to the party in the light of his own particular circumstances. Glasgow said that since placing their amendment on the agenda their attitude had changed and they now considered that each case be judged on its merits. A Bloomsbury delegate said that a line had to be drawn between the police force and the armed forces as a member could leave the police force if it proved an embarrassment to the Party but this did not apply to the armed forces. Members sometimes in the past had had to do things that they considered an embarrassment to the Party and had resigned. Another question was whether the authorities would not come down on the Party if we had a ruling of this nature. A Leyton Delegate said that from his own experience in the forces he had not found that political activities were prevented. For example, discussion groups were held. He himself knew of those who had been turned out of the forces because of political views held by them.

Glasgow amendment lost	8-57
Bloomsbury " "	13-54
SW London " "	11-56
Hackney, Paddington and Croydon " "	26-43
Ealing & Lewisham "	5-64
Ealing resolution "	32-33

RESOLUTION-Flitter & Borender (Fulham) "That this conference considers that any member who voluntarily (ie other than conscripted) joins the Armed forces (Army Navy and Air Force) shall be deemed to have acted in a manner detrimental to the interests of the Party"

Fulham opened by saying that most members seemed to agree that a line had to be drawn somewhere. The other resolutions put forward by other branches under this heading by other branches were of a similar nature. West Ham said that it was ludicrous for members of the Party to engage in the slaughter of their fellow workers and it they did so it was a violation of the Declaration of Principles. Paddington supported the resolution claiming that it does not violate the rules as was argued against the previous resolution and amendments. We should, as Socialists, be prepared to give up things to safeguard our membership of the Party. Another EC member said that he was opposed to members being in the Party whether they were conscripted or volunteered for the forces. It was an embarrassment to propagandists to be told of members volunteering for the forces and also an embarrassment to members personally. There were not many who volunteered and this was proof of the strength of the case of those who were opposed to it. A Hackney delegate said that when it became known that our members did not volunteer for the forces, while they may not agree with us, in the long run it would have a good effect on our propaganda. Our position would be plain on this, and we should avoid judging cases on their merits. Marylebone said that the resolution condemns members without a hearing. Another EC member claimed that he could see little difference between those in the forces and those engaged in the production of arms. We must not forget that in the past, and now to a more limited extent, and in the future to a greater extent, poverty forced workers into the armed forces. Edgware pointed out that if the resolution were carried it would automatically follow that members who volunteered for the forces would be expelled. A Hackney delegate pointed out that socialists like other workers were forced to work for wages, and that the energies of cage workers during the war were used for the prosecution of that war, yet those in the armed forces were more directly engaged in the slaughter. An EC member said that it was an embarrassment to him personally if members joined voluntarily. We had to draw a line somewhere. If a member joined the Labour Party he was expelled and we should take the same line with those that volunteer for the forces. From his own experience of the first world war his view was that to judge each case on its merits, from the point of view of the economic pressure of the member concerned, was entirely unsatisfactory. Our policy is one of opposition to war and no members volunteering for the forces should remain within our ranks. A Bloomsbury delegate suggested that we should leave the decision for another year as whatever the result today it would not have the unanimous support of the party. A Southend delegate said there was a danger of the party being called 'the party that fights for capitalism' if the resolution is lost. Another Bloomsbury delegate said that the members of the forces had no choice in the matter of strike breaking. An EC member said that were we to judge this

from the point of view of the Party or Socialism? If the former all members in any way connected with the forces should be out of the Party. But we aim to capture the armed forces and if this resolution is carried we shan't have one member in them. The army of Capitalism will grow larger and our difficulties will increase. Another member of the EC said that it as no argument in favour of the resolution to say that members volunteering for the forces were a source of personal embarrassment to other members. Fulham, in winding up, said they were opposed to prying into the private lives of members.

Resolution carried 36-25.

RESOLUTION:- (Southend) "This conference recommends that no member of the SPGB shall be a member of the Armed Forces".

Resolution list 9-64.

MESSAGES OF GREETING: were read from Dublin Socialist Group, S.P. of New Zealand, R. Frank (Vionna), S.P. of Australia and J. Boucher (Africa).

RESOLUTION. (Croydon) "That this conference instructs the EC to enquire into the possibility of instituting a uniform procedure throughout the Party for dealing with applicants for membership."

Croydon said that applicants were not being asked the proper questions and the keenness of some branches to get members was overshadowing the importance of being certain of the applicants understanding. A uniform syllabus giving a list of questions would prevent this. Edgware opposed the resolution saying that members were capable of asking the necessary questions, and if they were not, a list of questions would not help as the members themselves would not know the result. A Bloomsbury delegate said we should make it easier rather than more difficult for members to join the Party. We should get to know applicants personally and keep in touch with them. Some were nervous to join because of the questions that might be asked them. Marylebone supported the resolution on the grounds that this method would be easier. Members sometimes ask questions that are irrelevant and all questions should be simple and cover our case. South West London were in favour saying that each applicant should be treated in the same manner. If we make it easier for members to come in we are in danger of treating the Declaration of Principles too lightly. Croydon in winding up claimed that even now some members did not understand the position and it was necessary to safeguard the future of the Party.

Resolution lost 23-50.

RESOLUTION- (Kingston) "That this conference recommends that a Committee be set up to investigate the low return of ballot papers"

Resolution carried 36-29.

(4) PROPAGANDA

(a) 1948 Conference resolution.

RESOLUTION- (Hackney) "That this conference recommends that the post of Provincial Propagandist Organiser remain in abeyance".

Amendment - (Executive Committee) "That this conference recommends be deleted".

Addendum - (Bloomsbury) "to add 'unless in the opinion of the EC a suitable candidate is available'."

The EC amendment was agreed to.

Addendum carried 38-27.

As a Sub.Res. carried 38-27.

RESOLUTION- (Tottenham) "That this conference recommends that a fulltime paid London Propagandist Organiser be appointed immediately".

Amendment - (E.C.) "To delete the words 'that this conference recommends'" Agreed.

Addendum - (Bloomsbury) "To add 'provided that in the opinion of the EC a suitable candidate is available'"

Amendment - (Ealing) "To delete the word 'London'"

Ealing amendment lost 24-33

Bloomsbury addendum lost 25-32

Resolution lost 7-46.

(b) 1948 Delegate Meeting recommendation - no action.

(c) Propaganda Statistics - no action.

(d) Propaganda General.

RESOLUTION - (Bradford) "That this conference deprecates the use of the abbreviation SPGB on propaganda material, during speeches etc. when the general public

present"

Resolution lost 7-29.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (Bradford) "'Speakers Tests'. That the Branches be provided with a Standard set of examination questions, in order that they may test, and if satisfactory pass their own members as Party speakers."

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (Palmer's Green) "The position of new speakers who have not taken the New Speakers Test but who are speaking at outdoor meetings for the Party".

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (St. Pancras) "Do compulsory speakers tests assist the Party propaganda?"

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (Edgware) "That the Conference discuss the question of the New Speakers Test with a view to making it the responsibility of the Branches. Each Branch to receive a series of set questions to ask prospective speakers etc. Also that all indoor lecturers shall have passed this test and other questions that may arise".

An Edgware delegate said that the present procedure is confusing. The best people to judge speakers was the Branches themselves as Branch members see the individuals at work. It is inconvenient for provincial members to come to London to take the test. There were also a number of London meetings let down because the official speaker did not turn up and no qualified speaker was present. The tests are often nerve wracking. Indoor lecturers are not compelled to take the test and surely the procedure should apply to all speakers or none.

Palmer's Green said that Branches now often held meetings with non-qualified speakers when the official speaker had failed to arrive. An EC member (General Secretary) said that the test was imposed by EC ruling which had been confirmed by conference and it was doubtful whether the procedure could be changed without a resolution submitted by a Branch for placing on the Conference Agenda. The test had worked satisfactorily and had stimulated members to study. Arrangements have been and can be made for provincial members to take the test in the provinces. With regard to indoor lectures, the position is different. The speaker has carefully prepared his subject and questions are generally on the subject specified.

Fulham maintained that the procedure to take the test was simple, and arrangements could always be made for members to take it. Branches are not the best people to judge speakers and he for one, would not like his Branch to undertake that responsibility. Party members seem worried about the lack of speakers - this resolution will not alter it. A Bloomsbury delegate said that the test was not tied down to a set of questions but the idea of the test was to get a general idea of the knowledge of the member. If Branches are capable of judging their own speakers they should not need set questions.

RESOLUTION- Moss (Edgware) and Grew (Birmingham) "That this conference recommends that a Committee be set up to examine the question of speakers tests with a view to making it the responsibility of branches. To generally reorganise the existing New Speakers Test to cover both indoor and outdoor meetings, and report to the next Delegate meeting".

After short discussion similar to that on the item for discussion Weeks (Ealing) and Kersley (Bloomsbury) moved "That the vote be taken" and this was agreed to.

The resolution was lost by a large majority.

RESOLUTION- Barnard and Hopwood (St. Pancras) "That this conference is of the opinion that compulsory speakers tests do not assist Party Propaganda"

An EC member opened for St. Pancras. He said that the New Speakers Test had been introduced by the Party to deal with the special conditions of war-time but conditions were different now. Any member who understood the Party case would be a valuable asset on the platform. Another EC member said that if Branches now use unqualified speakers the matter should be reported. The examining Committee had found a general weakness in the knowledge of economics. There is no set list of questions for use in the New Speakers Test. Camberwell said that had they adhered to the present ruling no meetings in their area would have been held this winter. Another EC member put the view that all members are not capable of speaking on the outdoor platform. Some would-be speakers are unable to deal with the basic items of the Party case. If the Test is abolished there will be more complaints from Branches against speakers and the rule dealing with complaints against speakers would have to be applied. The opener wound up by saying that it was not the view of his branch that all members should be allowed to speak on the outdoor platform but that this should be left to the discretion of the branches. The best test for speakers is the platform itself.

Resolution lost by a large majority.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (Southend) "That this conference recommends the EC to purchase a second hand van and to equip it with a platform roof and 1 loudspeaker unit for the use of a full-time propagandist".

Southend said that in their opinion the days of the portable platform were over and great advantage could be obtained from the loud speaker method.

(5) LITERATURE

- (a) Delegate meeting recommendation. In reply to a question the Editorial Committee said that most of the material for the pamphlet on "War" had been collected and part of it had been written. They were unable to say when it would be ready for publication.

RESOLUTION-Naraika and James(Hackney)"That this conference recommends the EC to carry out the Delegate meeting recommendation on the publication of 'War and the Working class'"

The Editorial Committee said that if this resolution was carried they would have to scrap a large part of the work already done.

Resolution lost by a large majority.

- (b) Delegate meeting recommendation 1948.

RESOLUTION - Millen and Bryan "That this conference recommends that 2 page leaflets on variety of subjects similar to 'Introducing the SPGB' be produced"

A member of the Editorial Committee said that he thought the idea was a good one and it would help them if Branches would let them know what they considered to be suitable subjects and also indicate articles in the 'S/S' which might be used.

Resolution agreed to.

- (c) Party Publications(Editorial)

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION(Paddington) "Can the 'S/S' be improved"

RESOLUTION- Walters and Bryan(Paddington) "That the Editorial Committee circulate to Branches a list of suggested titles that would be suitable for inclusion in the 'S/S'"

A member of the Editorial Committee remarked that it would be better if members concentrated on one particular subject. They wanted members, for example, to write about the industry in which they were employed. Paddington said the idea would give the Editorial Committee very little work and would be worth trying.

Resolution carried unanimously.

The General Secretary asked conference to consider the present cost of the 'S/S'. The 16 page edition now meant a loss of £14. per month falling on HO funds.

RESOLUTION- Lawrence and George(Bloomsbury)"That the matter be referred to the Delegate Meeting and the EC circulate a report on the financial position to branches"

Resolution agreed to.

RESOLUTION- George and Kersley(Bloomsbury)"That this conference recommends that the 'S/S' be printed with the old size type"

Resolution carried unanimously.

- (d) Party Publications(Distribution)

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION.(Ealing) "Methods of selling party literature"

Ealing said they had done very good work with door to door canvassing and selling the 'S/S' outside main line stations. Kingston said the sale of the 'S/S' and its contents are connected. The number sold is very low in comparison to the membership of the Party. Members are not satisfied with the standard of the 'S/S' and therefore do not make great efforts to sell it.

A Bloomsbury delegate said that he had personally never hesitated to sell the 'S/S'. The only way to improve it was for more able writers to come along. The Central Circulating Committee had failed because members had no time to support it. We should be at meetings of all organisations with our literature.

RESOLUTION - Bernard and Hopwood "That this conference recommends the EC to circularise branches with a view to finding out their attitude to purchasing 'S/S' from Head Office at retail selling price".

RESOLUTION- McClaughlin and Totman(S.W.London)"That the EC be requested to consider the advisability of approaching the LCC and other bodies controlling parks and open spaces for permits to sell party literature on or in the parks and open spaces".

Resolution carried by a large majority.

AMENDMENTS TO RULES.

Leyton Branch

Rule 2 line 3 - "Delete after 'being' the words 'official due stamp' and insert 'the signature of the Treasurer'"

lost 11-56

Rule 9-to read" Each Branch to remit to Head Office two thirds of dues collected"

lost 11-56

Amendment Croydon Branch."That the word 'quarterly' be inserted between the words 'Head Office' and 'two thirds'"

lost 11-56.

Green Branch.

line 1 - "Delete '3d' and insert '4d' "

lost 8-68

line 2 - "Delete '2d' and insert '3d' "

lost 8-68

London Branch

Rule 3 - "Delete the last sentence"

lost 31-45

Walsbury Branch.

Rule 13 - "Delete all after the word 'Quorum' and insert 'Any member shall lapse from the EC if absent from three consecutive meetings unless granted leave of absence by the EC for Party business, holidays, sickness or other reasons acceptable to the EC; except that any member absent from six meetings in any quarter shall lapse'."

carried 43-29.

Tottenham Branch.

Rule 13 - "Delete all after 'quorum' and insert 'any member shall lapse from the EC if absent from three consecutive meetings or absent from six meetings in any quarter unless granted leave of absence by the EC'"

lost 12-56.

Kingston Branch

Rule 19 - "Insert after 'General Secretary' the words 'who shall sit Ex-Officio on the E.C.'"

lost 29-43.

S.W. London Branch.

Rule 25 - "Delete the rule as it stands and insert as follows:- 'When matters of political or economic importance arise either nationally or internationally, the EC may, or upon the requisition of six or more branches shall call a Delegate Meeting. In order that members shall have the fullest available information on the particular subject a report shall be placed before the delegates who in turn shall report to their branches who at a specially summoned meeting shall mandate their delegates to a delegate meeting which shall be recalled by the EC within three months of the initial meeting. The Delegate meeting shall have the power to (a) call a Party poll (b) instruct the EC on the matter before them. Delegate meetings shall be constituted as laid down in Rule 20'"

lost 26-41.

Amendment S.W. London. "To delete the first sentence of the proposed amendment to rule 25 and to insert in its place the following:- 'When matters of political or economic importance arise, either nationally or internationally, the EC may, or upon the requisition of six branches, shall call a Delegate to Delegate Meeting'."

lost 18-58.

Islington Branch. Proposed New Rule. "Each Branch, with the exception of Central Branch, shall contribute to the Parliamentary Fund a minimum of 6d per Branch member. The amount due shall be calculated on the basis on the number of members at the beginning of the quarter. The sum due shall be paid within four weeks of the end of the quarter. At the request of the Branch and for reasons deemed sufficient by the EC the EC shall have power to waive the contribution of that Branch. Branches shall not attempt to raise the sum by means of a personal levy upon the membership"

lost 18-58.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION. (Birmingham) "That the possibilities be explored of obtaining permanent advertising sites on the style of the 'Wayside-Pulpit' boards, for exhibiting party posters and pithy Socialist slogans in every city or town where a Branch or Group exists".

This item for discussion was moved as a resolution by Cook and Grew (Birmingham) and

carried 25-4.

RESOLUTION James and Griffiths (Hackney) "That this conference recommends that large display advertisements be inserted in the 'Picture Post' advertising the 'S/S' and 'Russia Since 1917'"

lost by a large majority.

RESOLUTION - (Ealing) "That this conference notes that in spite of the steady increase in the Party size, press publicity is still deplorably insufficient and instructs the EC to appoint a National Press representative whose duty it shall be to bring the Party's name before the National Press wherever possible".

Ealing opened by saying that the Party had never made a real effort in this connection. The experience would be useful and if we tried it for a year we could review the situation then. Hackney's view was that as the Party made a greater impression on the Working class, publicity would naturally accrue. South West London thought that all members should write to the press and a National Press Office could later be appointed to co-ordinate their efforts. Camberwell said that many members write to the Press but not all of their letters properly represent the Party case. The question of National Press

Publicity should be left to the Publicity Committee. An EC member said that the election campaigns had shown that good work could be done in this way, but those who could write to the press were also needed to write articles for the 'S/S'. Ealing wound up by saying that they had had success with the local press. The Publicity Committee already had too much to do and we should have one member responsible for this work, and we should start as soon as possible in view of the approaching election.

Resolution carried 63-0.

(9) ORGANISATIONS ABROAD

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION(Fulham Branch) "That Socialists in any country be allowed to join their nearest active group".

There was a brief discussion on this item.

The Overseas Secretary gave news of the group in Dublin and Comrade M.Cullen of this group addressed the conference.

(8) ELECTORAL ACTIVITY.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION.(Manchester) "That this conference is of the opinion that only monies(gifts, donations, collections etc) specially subscribed for the purpose of contesting Parliamentary action should be used for that particular purpose, That no call whatever be made upon the general funds of the Party and the EC is instructed to act accordingly".

Manchester opened by saying that they were opposed to the running of candidates. The General Fund should be used to extend the Party propaganda including Educational purposes. Money used for Parliamentary activity should be only that sent for that particular purpose as using the General Fund may stop other more useful activity. Paddington said that the Party had committed itself to Parliamentary activity and any money necessary should be drawn from the Party Funds. No other line was drawn when it came to questions of other forms of activity. Bloomsbury said that if Manchester's idea was adopted there might be a brake on our electoral activity when funds were exhausted.

RESOLUTION- Poole and Mattingly(Palmers Green) "That the SPGB being a political Party shall contest elections wherever and whenever practicable and shall use their funds accordingly". A general discussion took place but the chairman ruled R.McLaughlin of South West London Branch out of order for discussing the advisability of contesting elections.

RESOLUTION - R.McLaughlin and Rush(Hackney) "The chairman leave the chair"
(lost)

Lost 4-37.

A general discussion took place points from which were as follows:-

Some members were opposed to Parliamentary activity and would not wish the funds they contribute to be used for this purpose. Other funds suffered when the Parliamentary fund increased, and therefore the net cost of £80 which fell on the Party for the first election campaign did not represent an accurate figure.

Resolution carried by a large majority.

RESOLUTION -Moss and Ford" That this conference recommends that the EC together with the Branches concerned make preliminary electoral arrangements at once, announce our prospective candidates and generally organise preparations between now and the general election".

Elgware said that the previous campaigns had been rushed and we should now make our arrangements in good time for the next election. A member of the Parliamentary Committee asked conference for a decision on the number of constituencies to be contested. When this decision had been made the Committee were ready to go right ahead.

Resolution carried 38-4.

RESOLUTION- Grew and Cook(Birmingham)"That this conference recommends that after the forthcoming general election no constituency be contested unless a prospective candidate had been adopted for a period of at least two years".

Birmingham wanted propaganda in the constituencies at least two years prior to the elections. We should have a number of candidates and the electors should be asked to provide the funds. Islington said it was questionable whether better results came from money spent in a fairly long period prior to an election rather than in the election campaign itself. Leyton said that the resolution focussed too much attention on the candidates.

Resolution lost by largemajority.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION.(Lewisham) "The advisability of contesting more than one constituency at the next General Election".

RESOLUTION-"That this conference recommends that in the light of the EC's report, that we contest both East Ham South and North Paddington at the next general election" (Moss and Ford - Edgware)

... said that the ...
... those who could ...
... Publicity Committee up by ...
... for this work, and we should ...
... be allowed to join ...
... Cullen of this ...
... only ...
... for ...

... said that members did not realise the amount of work involved in two sessions. Paddington urged that members should be given work to do as that is what is needed. We had at least 500 members in London and that was enough to run two campaigns. West Ham stated that there were enough members in the area of East Ham to run a campaign. It was a good constituency in every respect.

Resolution carried 51-8.

OTHER BUSINESS.

Comrade R. Vicary (Central Branch) asked for permission to address the conference. Resolution - Millenand Cottis "That Vicary be heard" Agreed.

Vicary raised the question of non-representation of Central Branch members at Delegate Meetings and Conferences. His plan was that Central Branch members should be permitted to express their views and register a vote on items on the agendas to the Central Branch Secretary. The majority decision on each resolution would constitute the Central Branch Vote.

RESOLUTION - Mattingly and Flitter "That this conference recommends the EC to consider the enfranchising of Central Branch members for the Annual Conference and Delegate Meeting".

AMENDMENT - McLaughlin and Totmen (S.W. London) "That the EC be asked to consider the practicability of giving Central Branch members the opportunity of placing items on the final agenda and being represented at the annual conference and delegate meeting".

Amendment carried by large majority.

Sub. Resolution - ditto-

(6) EDUCATION.

RESOLUTION - Islington "That this conference instructs the EC to set up machinery to more effectively utilise the energies of those members who have passed through the tutorial classes at Head Office".

Islington expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that members were going through these classes and their energies were then lost to Party activity in this sphere. Edgware said that the machinery asked for by the resolution already existed. Leyton asked for concrete suggestions. Marylebone suggested that members of the class should tour branches and receive the criticism of experienced members. An EC member said that most of our educational work lacked purpose. Members should be given an opportunity to develop the capabilities they possess and so be given a means of expression. Another EC member said the classes had been successful but in the long run it depended to a great extent on the members themselves. There was no short cut to being an effective Party member - the only road was hard work.

Resolution carried 57-8.

RESOLUTION - James and Rush "That this conference recommends the EC to review the entire educational system". Agreed.

RESOLUTION - Flitter and Borender (Fulham) "That this conference recommends the EC to investigate the possibility of setting up a Research Bureau for the benefit of all Party Propagandists". Agreed.

RESOLUTION - Flitter and Verity "That this conference recommends that the EC consider the possibility of running a Party summer week-end school". Agreed.

(10) FINANCE

No action.

(11) MISCELLANEOUS.

RESOLUTION - Moss (Edgware) Coster (Leyton) "That future Delegate meetings be extended to two days and that the second day be given over for 'Items for discussion'".
AMENDMENT - Flitter and Borender (Fulham) "Delete all after 'two days' and insert 'after the completion of all business the remainder of the time be given over to items for discussion'".

Fulham said that the business should be completed before "Items for Discussion" be dealt with.

Amendment lost by large majority.

Resolution carried 31-20.

RESOLUTION - (Bradford) "That the EC take any necessary action, by legal process or otherwise to prevent the deliberate and fraudulent mis-use of the name of the Party by certain National newspapers who on all possible occasions refer to the British Labour Party as the Socialist Party".

Resolution lost 2-64.

RESOLUTION - (Bradford) "That this conference recommends that all written communications from Party branches or Head Office to outside organisations or persons be made on approved printed Party stationery"

ADDENDUM - (Croydon) "That the words 'to be obtained from Head Office' be added after the word 'Stationery' "

Addendum carried 36-16

As a Sub. Res. " 39-18.

RESOLUTION - (Bradford) "That this conference consider the implication that by our own use of the title 'The Socialist Party' of Great Britain we are tacitly admitting that some other political party - The British Labour Party - is 'The Socialist Party' instead of ourselves.

Resolution 1 st 2-70.

RESOLUTION - (Southend) That this conference recommends that the SPGB adopts the title of the 'World Socialist Party'

AMENDMENT - (Executive Committee) "To delete the words 'that this conference recommends' Agreed.

ADDENDUM - (Birmingham) "To add 'Or such title as will indicate the international character of the Party'

AMENDMENT - (Fulham) "That the words 'and its companion parties' be inserted between the words 'British' and 'Adopts'".

Birmingham said that as we worked for World Socialism we should call ourselves 'The World Socialist Party'. Manchester did not see how a change of name would avoid confusion. Bloomsbury said that our job was to deal with the British Capitalist Class. If we changed our name the workers would think that the SPGB had disappeared. Southend said that a new title would emphasise our international character and distinguish us from reformist organisations.

Fulham amendment lost 17-57

Birmingham addendum " 11-63

Southend resolution " 20-54

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (Southend) "That this conference wishes to draw the attention of the EC to the fact that resolutions from branches to conference, if carried, are not recommendations but instructions to the EC. We therefore assert that the Standing Orders Committee has no right to preface conference resolutions with 'That this conference recommends' "

RESOLUTION - Kerr and Carver (West Ham) "That it is a violation of Rule 23 for the EC to place motions and amendments before the Annual Conference and for Standing Orders Committee to alter the wording of motions and amendments as submitted by branches."

AMENDMENT - McLaughlin and Trotman (SW London) "That this conference protests against the alteration of any resolution sent in by branches without the consent of the Branch".

The General Secretary said that the EC this year had recognised that resolutions sent in by branches should not have been prefaced by the Standing Orders Committee with the words 'That this conference recommends' and the EC had accordingly placed a number of amendments on the agenda to bring the resolution back to the form required by the branches who had submitted them. As far as the placing of items on the agenda by the EC was concerned this had been previously done by a number of EC's on other occasions.

The amendment was agreed to.

The Sub. Res. agreed.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION:- Paddington Branch "Socialism and Marxism".

RESOLUTION- Coster (Leyton) and Flitter (Fulham) "That this item be deferred until the Autumn Delegate meeting" Agreed.

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION (Croydon) "Amplification of EC reports".

Croydon said we needed more information as to what actually was said at EC meetings. The General Secretary said it would be difficult to do more than was being done at present with the present party staff position.

RESOLUTION- McLaughlin and Trotman (SW London) "That the EC be requested to see that all sub committee reports are submitted in writing and are issued with EC reports to branches" Cd 19-9.

RESOLUTION McLaughlin and Cottis "That Fraternal Greetings be sent to Socialists abroad" agreed.

During the conference there were present 74 delegates representing 25 branches. Eccles Branch not being represented.

C.C. Groves,
General Secretary,

23rd April 1949.